United Nations

Daily Highlights

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FRIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ United Nations relief convoy arrives in Srebrenica; meanwhile, Security Council is holding consultations on draft resolution enforcing the "no-fly zone" over Bosnia and Herzegovina; action by Council expected early next week.

+ In Addis Ababa, Secretary-General's Special Representative for Somalia holds series of meetings on transition between United States-led Task Force and UNOSOM II.

+ United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in Near East condemns killing of United Nations teacher by Israeli forces.

+ Safeguards Agreement with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea remains in force, confirms International Atomic Energy Agency.

+ International Day for Elimination of Racial Discrimination to be observed by Special Committee against Apartheid at Headquarters on Monday, 22 March.

+ New President of Disarmament Conference calls on Democratic People's Republic of Korea to reconsider its "retrograde" decision to withdraw from Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty.

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A 19-truck United Nations convoy carrying foods and medicine finally arrived in Srebrenica today, according to a United Nations spokesman. The United Nations was "very pleased" that the convoy had made it through, but given the number of people there and their needs, he said, "we need a convoy every day to get the material in". Two other convoys headed for Zepa and Goradze were "stuck" because they were being subjected to inventory checks.

The news of the arrival of relief convoy to the eastern Bosnian Muslim enclave came amidst consultations of the Security Council today on a draft

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resolution enforcing the "no-fly zone", sponsored by France. Consultations were expected to continue this afternoon, with action taken on the draft most likely on Monday or Tuesday, the spokesman said.

Meanwhile, bilateral talks aimed at resolving the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina continued today at Headquarters, chaired by the Co-Chairmen of the International Conference. According to their spokesman, Fred Eckhard, Cyrus Vance, the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy, and Lord Owen, the European Community mediator, met this morning with Radovan Karadzic, the Bosnian Serb leader. Mr. Owen then joined a meeting between the Secretary-General and the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro).

The Co-Chairmen were also scheduled to meet with President Alija Izetbegovic of Bosnia and Herzegovina this afternoon, and with the Foreign Minister of Spain. A meeting with the Deputy Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation was postponed until tomorrow.

In related news, the Permanent Representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the United Nations, Muhamad Sacirbey, told correspondents today that President Izetbegovic had left yesterday's meetings at Headquarters, because "he feels he cannot continue under these conditions". Mr. Sacirbey said the President would be waiting in his hotel room until the conditions on the ground in his country improved.

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In Addis Ababa today, Admiral Jonathan Howe, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Somalia, held a series of meetings on the transition between the United States-led Task Force and the United Nations Observer Mission in Somalia (UNOSOM II). According to a United Nations spokesman, Admiral Howe said planning for the transition, which is scheduled to be concluded by 1 May, was "moving ahead very well".

Admiral Howe arrived in the Ethiopian capital yesterday to participate in the reconciliation talks on Somalia, which have been temporarily suspended following recent clashes between warring Somali factions in Kismayo. The Conference on National Reconciliation in Somalia is expected to resume tomorrow when a fact-finding mission, sent today to Kismayo to investigate, returns to Addis Ababa to report its findings.

According to a summary of today's meetings of the Conference issued at Headquarters, Admiral Howe was briefed on the progress of the Conference by Lansana Kouyate, the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General. He also met with representatives of regional organizations and various political groups to evaluate the situation in Somalia.

Representatives of all Somali political parties and non-political groups are participating in the Conference.

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The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has condemned the killing of a UNRWA teacher by Israeli forces yesterday, according to a press release issued today in Vienna. The teacher, Yusif Al-Gharib, was shot when Israeli forces opened fire on a group of mourners near a wake house in the Rafah refugee camp in the Gaza Strip.

The Commissioner-General of UNRWA, Ilter Turkmen, said the incident was the "result of the widespread and increased use of force by Israeli troops in the Gaza Strip".

According to the Agency, since 1 December last year, Israeli troops or settlers have killed 45 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, including 13 children under age 16. Some 1,800 Palestinians had also been injured during the same period, including over 350 children who were shot by live ammunition.

The UNRWA has repeatedly urged the Government of Israel to take steps to defuse the situation in the Gaza Strip, which had recently witnessed a surge of deaths among Palestinians and Israelis.

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The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has confirmed that the Safeguards Agreement with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea remains in force. The Agency's notice comes one week after that country announced its decision to withdraw from the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT).

At a special meeting in Vienna yesterday, IAEA's Board of Governors reaffirmed the urgency of allowing the Agency to take necessary measures to resolve differences and to ensure verification of compliance with the Agreement. A resolution adopted by the 35-member Board expressed particular concern that North Korea's announcement to withdraw from the NPT came at a time when the IAEA was seeking specific clarifications regarding that country's nuclear material.

The Board regretted the fact that the Pyongyong Government had not yet given a positive response to IAEA's request of 25 February for additional information and access to two additional sites. The Board also asked IAEA Director-General, Hans Blix, to seek a dialogue with North Korea and to report on its response at the next Board meeting on 31 March.

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The Special Committee against Apartheid will hold a solemn meeting in observance of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination at Headquarters on Monday, 22 March. The meeting, which will be held at Headquarters in New York, will be preceded by the ceremony of receipt of contributions and pledges by Member States to United Nations assistance programmes for southern Africa.

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The annual observance marks the thirty-third anniversary of the massacre at Sharpeville, South Africa (21 March 1960), of 69 unarmed persons, mostly women and children, demonstrating peacefully against the pass laws.

The international missions deployed in South Africa to monitor the process towards democracy have proposed that the day be celebrated in the future as "the Day of Peace and Reconciliation". The proposal was put forward in a joint statement, signed by the United Nations, the Commonwealth, the European Community, and the Organization of African Unity (OAU). It was issued at Headquarters on Tuesday, 16 March.

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Addressing the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva yesterday, its new President, Gerald E. Shannon (Canada), called on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to reconsider its "retrograde" decision to withdraw from the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT).

He went on to call for new approaches to arms control and disarmament machinery to make it more forward-looking, efficient and results-oriented. The primary role of the Conference on Disarmament, he said, was to negotiate global arms control and disarmament instruments. The actual negotiation of a comprehensive test ban treaty to eliminate all nuclear testing in all environments for all time remained a priority objective, he said.

The representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Tchoe Il, said the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) had used information from a third country and had proposed ad hoc inspections which were not in conformity with the NPT. Those inspections had been imposed on North Korea, he said, adding that all countries had the right to self-determination and "self-defence".

The Conference also heard a message from the Conference on Women in the Peace Process stressing the importance of disarmament, nuclear disarmament in particular, to overcome violence, and the essential contribution that women could make to the peace and disarmament process.

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